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Summer 2011

With Honors (Volume 4)

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Recommended Citation

Iowa State University Honors Program, "With Honors (Volume 4)" (2011). *With Honors*. 4.
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THE IOWA STATE HONORS ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

WITH HONORS

SUMMER 2011
VOL. 4, NO. 1

50th Anniversary Celebrations

A chilly but successful VEISHEA celebration in April wound up Honors' year-long celebration of its 50th anniversary. Honors hosted an open house on VEISHEA Saturday, a first for the eight year-old Jischke Honors Building.

During the open house, Honors students made balloon animals for visitors after weeks of practicing the art. All visitors were welcomed to enjoy a slice of birthday cake and to browse among the Honors research posters on display in the atrium.

After a quick cleanup, the doors reopened for a reception for Honors alumni and guests. At the reception Honors recognized Don Beitz, Distinguished

Professor of Animal Science, and Elizabeth Schabel, retired lecturer of English, for their many years of dedication to the Honors Program, and Alison and Mark Law for their leadership in forming the Honors Alumni Board and their generosity to the Honors Program.

The VEISHEA celebration was the last in a series of Honors' birthday parties. In addition to social events sponsored by the Honors Student Board, the anniversary included a sponsored speech and visit from travel writer Pico Iyer; a Parents' Weekend tailgate (complete with pregame munchies); and a student-faculty Jeopardy contest, barely, yet fairly, won by the quick-witted (and quick-fingered!) students.

Remembering Honors

by Ian Ringgenberg ('08, Anthropology)

I first became aware of the Honors students who had come before me in 2004, when I found several scrapbooks in a storage closet of Harwood house. The photographs on those construction paper pages depicted generations of students who had formed the traditions and identity of the place I too called home. So much about them seemed familiar: the community, the humor, and the Honors experience. Apart from some of the less flattering hairstyles of recent decades, the students described in the quotes, stories, and photographs of those scrapbooks would fit right in with my own group of friends.

This awareness deepened as I continued my education at Iowa State. You can't go far on this campus without running into an Honors legacy. I mentored for a professor in psychology who looked forward to taking a new first-year Honors student under her wing every spring. I sat on the Committee on Lectures, where the broad interests of Honors students result in some

of the brightest minds and engaging voices in the world coming to speak in Ames. I joined the Government of the Student Body, where a great number of Honors students have represented Iowa State students to the university, city, and state.

In all of these activities, I felt the presence of the Honors students who had come before me. When my turn came to complete an Honors project, I learned about the last thirty years of student life by conducting oral histories with Iowa State alumni. In these conversations I discovered the impact of Honors not only on our education but also in our lives. I spoke with a historian, visiting for a lecture, who found a voice on campus after Liz Beck, former Director of the Honors Program, urged her to join the Committee on Lectures. I met a climate educator passionate about fieldwork who learned at Iowa State that the best learning takes place outside the classroom.

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From Stars to Stage

Mitchell Nieland ('14, Performing Arts) arrived at Iowa State from his hometown of Woodward with his head in the clouds. That is, he intended to declare a major in Meteorology, though he had a strong interest in music and theater as well. But weather forecasters don't often get a real chance to perform, so now Mitch has gone from the clouds to the stars – stars of the stage, that is, as a Performing Arts major.

It didn't take much to trigger that sizable step from a rigorous science to the arts. Mitch's science grades were fine but he wanted something "that would combine academics and what I feel passionate about," he says. But he's not relying on the fickle luck of theater for his future, much as he'd like to climb to the top: Mitch is thinking of adding yet another field of study, a Spanish major, and studying in Valencia before he's through.

So far, Mitch has accrued a hefty list of stage credits at ISU, as a gangster in "Guys and Dolls," a family member in "The Miracle Worker," and Linus in "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown." This summer, he will play the role of Young Snape in a Harry Potter musical, "The Final Battle," at a Universal Studios-owned hotel in Orlando, a role for which he auditioned on YouTube. But what he's most famous for is an off-stage role, that of "the singing guy" around campus. Mitch became well known last year for singing – country, show tunes, pop songs – all over campus. It was a combination of self-expression and vocal warmups, he says, and it didn't bother him at all when comments about him, both positive and critical, began to appear in the ISU Daily.

"There's a Facebook fan page about me," Mitch says with a smile. At a recent Relay for Life fundraiser, participants requested pictures with him when they learned he was the local crooner. "I guess it... generated fandom!" he says.

Mitch never did sing in the shower, or generally inside buildings, and this year he's greatly reduced his profile as a public singer. "I changed habits when we were rehearsing for 'Charlie Brown,'" he says. "The director said it's not good for my voice." But Mitch plans to keep on singing, as well as keeping active in Honors. A member of FHP in 2009, he will be an FHP leader this fall. He's been active in the First-Year/Mentor Research Program and enjoys Honors seminars, including a recent one on the "Social Justice League," which provided a critical look at comics and superheroes. Mitch has found Honors a "great help" in "connecting with people, personally and professionally. As for his Honors project? Don't be surprised if he comes up with a staging of "Stormy Weather" – in Spanish!



Mitch Nieland in the role of Linus at Fisher Theatre.

National Recognition for Students

Applying for national scholarships is always challenging, even harder when you're applying from abroad. But Nate Looker ('12, Global Resource Systems and Agronomy), who this year studied in Guatemala, must have done a great job. He is a rare double winner of both the Udall and Goldwater Scholarships.

The Udall is given to students likely to make important contributions in science, service, or community action. The Goldwater is the nation's premier undergraduate scholarship for students in mathematics, natural science, and engineering. For Nate, whose plans include earning a Ph.D. in landscape ecology, this prestigious double award will help him on the path to a research career.

Nate was not alone in earning national recognition this spring. A second Goldwater scholar is Chloe Dedic ('12, Mechanical Engineering). Chloe plans a concurrent B.S./M.S. program at Iowa State en route to a Ph.D. and an academic career. Mischa Olson ('12, Biology) received an honorable mention in the Goldwater competition.

William Larsen passes away

William Larsen, retired professor of Mechanical Engineering, has died at the age of 74. Honors Alumni may remember his service as Director, seminar instructor, and advisor for many years. A fine teacher and scholar, Dr. Larsen especially enjoyed working with Honors students.

Honors News

- First-Year Honors students will once again share a common reading. This new addition to the FHP experience began last year, when students read and discussed contemporary novelist Colson Whitehead's *Apex Hides the Hurt*. This summer, incoming FHP students will read Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, a parable about the search for one's personal goals, and one's "treasure." First published in 1988, this novel has been translated into dozens of languages and sold tens of millions of copies. Leaders of FHP seminars will weave the themes and ideas of the novel throughout the Hon 121 semester.

- Last year the Honors Alumni Board discussed the creation of a seminar for upper-level Honors students that would emphasize ethical and critical thinking. As a first step toward that goal, Honors has received a Miller Faculty Fellowship to bring an expert speaker to campus and to pilot a set of seminars, to be taught by faculty from each of the colleges, to encourage critical thinking in Honors.

- Curtis Youngs, Associate Professor of Animal Science, and Shana Carpenter, Assistant Professor of Psychology, were this spring's recipients of the University Honors Committee's faculty awards in teaching and mentoring.

- The Honors Student Board recognized Tim Derrick, Associate Professor of Kinesiology, with this year's W. Robert Parks Award for his ongoing support of Honors students.

Alumni News

Mark Law ('81, Computer Engineering), founder and outgoing chair of the Honors Alumni Advisory Board, was named the winner of the J.J. Ebers Award for 2010. This prestigious award, the highest given by the IEEE Electron Device Society, is given for "either a single or a series of contributions of recognized scientific, economic, or social significance in the broad field of electron devices," according to the association website. This award of \$5000 commemorates Jewell James Ebers, whose work in transistors shaped the understanding and technology of electron devices.

Mark, who is Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the University of Florida, was a seminar leader in the Honors Program and served as co-president of the Honors Student Board. Along the way he met his wife and greatest supporter, Alison. Mark worked with Edwin C. Jones, now University Professor Emeritus of Electrical and Computer Engineering, on his Honors project.

Barbara Berg ('77, Interior Design and Craft Design) enjoys directing students in northeast Iowa to the Honors Program. A nontraditional student, Barbara was 33 and a Lutheran pastor's wife when she entered Iowa State as a freshman. Barbara joined Honors late in her first year, emphasizing textiles with her double Design major.

Barbara's Honors project, on Scandinavian design, was a great foundation for later studying weaving at the Valdres

Husflidskol in Fagernes, Norway, which is a sister city to Barbara's hometown of Decorah. After working in different businesses and in several cities as her husband accepted various pastoral "calls," Barbara had the great fortune of meeting a weaver in Northfield, MN, who wanted to create materials for use in churches. "She needed someone who could weave, had business and sales experience, was an art major and a pastor's spouse. I was an answer to prayer!" laughs Barbara.

Barbara bought the business in 1992, naming it "I Weave What I Believe." She designs and creates altar, pulpit, and lectern drapings, stoles, tapestries and other church-related linens. "Don't be afraid to try something you've never done" is Barbara's advice to students and young alumni; "wonderful things can happen."

Annabeth Robb ('65, Textiles and Clothing) was among the Honors alumni who were unable to make it to VEISHEA this spring – 4500 miles was a bit far for a weekend trip! Annabeth sent word of what she's been up to in Strathaven, Lanarkshire, Scotland.

Annabeth is grateful for the broad-based education offered in Honors: it's the best tool for "all the unexpected twists and turns in life, especially if you combine a career with marriage." Annabeth married a Scotsman while earning an M.S. and followed him to the U.K. While she spent part of her career in textile science, a further move led her to beef farming, real estate sales, and yoga instruction. Recently

she has taught Dru Yoga to Asian men and women in their sixties, seventies, and eighties. "Life continues to be interesting and challenging!"

Don't Forget the Family Book

Please keep in touch with us via the Honors Family Book. This annual compilation of news, notes, life events and accomplishments of Honors alumni is now online and available via password to all donors. If you are not currently a donor, a printed version of the Honors Family Book is available for \$5. To post items, please go to the Honors webpage (www.honors.iastate.edu) and look in the left column under Alumni. If you have questions about the Honors Family Book, please contact Linda Young at lindakay@iastate.edu.

Students Help Lead National Honors Group

Patients don't help run the AMA, nor do shoppers manage the corner store, but the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), the professional association for undergraduate Honors programs, welcomes students on its Board of Directors. Lately, two of those students have come from the Honors Program at Iowa State.

The NCHC and Honors at ISU have a long and cordial history. Liz Beck, longtime director of the Honors Program, has worked with the NCHC for many years, including stints as Executive Secretary, Secretary/Treasurer, and as Interim Executive Director even after retiring from ISU in 2004. Administrative Director Laurie Fiegel also has a long association with NCHC, currently helping to run orientation "boot camp" sessions for those new to working in Honors.

Perhaps that history prompted Anna Mullen ('11, Anthropology) to run for a one-year position on the NCHC board. As a student member, Anna voted on bylaws and worked with students across the country to bring opportunities to Honors members. Just as Anna was wrapping up her work last fall, Jared Knight ('13, Political Science and Speech Communication) was elected for a two-year term. As a sophomore attending the 2010 conference in Kansas City, he was "struck by the depth of knowledge and enthusiasm" for Honors education among students, faculty and staff.

Both Anna and Jared have been section leaders for the First-Year Honors Program (FHP), active in the Honors Student Board, and Honors Ambassadors, meeting with prospective students and families to discuss FHP and its benefits. Anna has just achieved alumni status and has accepted a year-long position at the Danish Immigrant Museum. Jared, with two years left at Iowa State, plans to attend law school. He recently added to his resume the position of Vice-President of the Government of the Student Body (GSB), continuing a recent trend of Honors involvement at GSB-executive levels.

Spring Break in Belize

From hand-mixing concrete to swimming under waterfalls, ten Honors students enjoyed every moment of their recent Spring Break trip to Belize. This was the second year for Honors students to perform service in an international setting, following last year's service trip to Oaxaca, Mexico.

Honors Administrative Director Laurie Fiegel, who accompanied the students to Belize, also prepared them for the experience in a two-credit Honors Seminar on the history and culture of the nation. One travel highlight for Laurie was the experience of creating a sweet-smelling herb concoction, which is poured over one's head and then washed off via a refreshing ocean dip.

The students praised the trip as an "indispensable, unforgettable" experience. David Harper ('13, Kinesiology and Health) called the trip "one of the most rewarding experiences of my college career. I will cherish the lessons learned from this trip for the rest of my life!" Jayme Elizabeth Beedle ('13, Kinesiology and Health) agreed, adding, "I can't wait to study abroad again." And for Chloe Ward ('14, Civil Engineering), traveling to Belize was a "life-changing experience" that helped her "realize even more what I want to do in the future – use civil engineering to help advance underdeveloped communities."

The Honors Program, working with the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, elected to visit Belize this year both because of the country's political stability and because it is English-speaking. Next year, Honors students may travel to Costa Rica, and perhaps Mexico, Belize, and Costa Rica will be visited in a regular rotation.



Honors students take a break during their service trip to Belize.

RINGGENBERG cont. from page 1

Last year, I taught these lessons to a new generation when, as a graduate assistant in the Admissions, I gave campus tours to National Merit Scholars. These students, who often choose between ISU and the nation's most prestigious schools, heard about Honors students studying abroad, participating in research in their first year, interning at dynamic and well-known companies, and going on to premier graduate programs. And when these students arrive on campus, I suspect it will be in Honors classes, in the Jischke lounge, and in the Honors residence halls that they will find their home, just as I did during my undergraduate years, and you did during yours.

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